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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNGA](#) [SL](#)
SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE REQUESTS HIGH LEVEL BILATS DURING UNGA
REF: STATE 72078

Classified By: Ambassador June Carter Perry for reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) Foreign Minister Launch Bangura made request to Ambassador July 10 for high-level bilateral meetings during President Koroma's participation in the 2008 UNGA. The GoSL, and its President, had earlier asked for an official visit to Washington. In light of timing, this did not appear feasible.

¶2. (C) President Koroma, who is to speak in New York on September 26, is requesting a bilateral meeting with POTUS, Secretary Rice and Assistant Secretary Frazer between September 22-25. The Foreign Minister is expected to arrive in New York on or about September 14. Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Vandi Minah is also to be part of the delegation. (Note: Further information the composition of delegation will be provided septel in required format. End note.)

¶3. (C) Post supports this request as Sierra Leone has been a reliable ally, most recently as a co-sponsor of our Zimbabwe Resolution. President Koroma also spoke out at the African Union Summit against the mugabe regime and his team worked hard to persuade other African nations to join the GoSL position. The country also recognized Kosovar independence at our request and did so publicly, as did few African nations. In pursuing democracy, Sierra Leone held free and fair national elections in 2007 followed by successful local elections in 2008. The President has made anti-corruption measures his top priority and has sent strong measures to Parliament coupled with the appointment of a new Anti-Corruption Commission.

¶4. (C) While we cannot offer Sierra Leone major funding resources, we strongly believe the country's success in democracy building after a major civil war, its support of the Special Court and its willingness to take a leadership position on international issues merit recognition. The high level bilats would send the right signal not only to this country but to the region.

PERRY